



Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises and Ukraine's Prospects in the Black Sea Region

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Introduction by Ray Finch, FMSO

For more than 15 years, the United States Navy has been working with its Ukrainian counterparts in helping to host the annual Sea Breeze naval exercise. Over time, other NATO and non-NATO countries have also participated, making it today one of the most important Black Sea naval exercises.

Given Ukraine's important geo-political location, and its significant ethnic Russian population, the exercise has not been free of controversy. Some interpreted this exercise as a move by the US and/or NATO to move into Russia's historical sphere of influence. On occasion, public protests have led to the cancellation of the exercise. However, since Ukraine adopted a non-alignment stance in 2010, public protests over this exercise have decreased.

This paper focuses on the changing Ukrainian public perceptions of Sea Breeze. By closely examining six Ukrainian regional and national newspapers from 2001 until 2013, this study uncovers several underlying themes that explain varying public support and resistance to these exercises. The results suggest that Ukrainian public opinion is not uniform, and emphasize the importance in keeping these regional differences in mind when conducting a public information campaign regarding the Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine.



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I. Introduction: the Black Sea Region and Ukraine

The Black Sea region is one of the most heterogeneous and complex areas in wider Europe and comprises countries of different size, political and economic development, military potential, geopolitical interests, and cultural, social and religious traditions (Pavliuk, 2004; Perepelytsya, 2004; Polyakov, 2004; Weihe, 2007). Because of this diversity, some scholars have questioned whether the Black Sea area could be considered a true region (Japaridze, 2010; Klympush-Tsintsadze, 2004; Weihe, 2007). Nevertheless, there is an inevitable recognition that the Black Sea area has been evolving into a true geopolitical center that links together Central Asia, Southeast Europe, and the Middle East (Japaridze, 2010; Weihe, 2007; Wood, 2010). The significance of the Black Sea area has been increasing with its reshaping geography and politics after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War era, and as a result of the accelerated process of EU and NATO enlargement (Pavliuk, 2004). The Black Sea is also an area of major energy transport routes that link Europe with the oil- and gas-rich Caspian basin.

The Black Sea region is therefore a strategically important area, where multiple interests intersect and clash at the same time. Not surprisingly, the Black Sea is replete with numerous security-related issues, including ongoing conflicts and territorial disputes (Georgia, Transdnistria), competition over energy resources, environmental problems, illegal migration, custom and border patrol issues, drug and weapon smuggling, human trafficking, organized





crime and terrorism (Cornell, Jonsson, Nilsson, & Häggström, 2006; Minchev, 2009; Roberts, 2006; Rumer & Simon, 2006; Weihe, 2007; Wood, 2010). Hence, it is hard to imagine the possibility of finding systemic solutions to these interlinked problems without some kind of collective security paradigm and multinational collaborative efforts that involve all Black Sea states (George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, 2004; Konoplyov, 2010; Minchev, 2009; Shelest, 2009; Tokar, 2010).

Among other countries in the region, Ukraine plays a particularly important role for regional stability: its geographical position between East and West and its proximity to Turkey make it a transit territory that facilitates the illegal transiting of drugs, weapons and human trafficking (Tokar, 2010). Ukraine is also at the center of a number of international disputes and tensions that relate to the Black Sea and its immediate neighbors (Roslycky & Boonstra,

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2007). All these factors create unique challenges and opportunities for Ukraine in the Black Sea area, as it is positioned strategically in the midst of both conflicting and complimentary interests. For Ukraine, the Black Sea region has been an area of many aspirations and unrealized and prospective opportunities, as well as worries due to the behavior of its immediate neighbor – Russia.

For Russia, the Black Sea region has always been strategically important for both military and economic reasons, and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea area became yet another venue for exercising imperial interests over former Soviet Republics, particularly Ukraine and Georgia, which recently attempted to seek NATO membership (Aleksandrov, 2011). Seeking to improve the terms and conditions of the Russian natural gas supply to Ukraine, Ukrainian President Yanukovych extended the Russian lease of naval facilities in Crimea by 25 years, with the possibility of a 5-year renewal. This helped to cement the positions of the Russian Black Sea Fleet - a large operational-strategic subunit of the Russian military. However, it did not prevent Russia from engaging in various political manipulations and exerting psychological pressure over Ukraine in the Black Sea region.

One such example is the controversial incident of Russian military drills conducted in the Black Sea area in March 2013 (Ukrainian News, 29 March, 2013). The controversy was about whether Russia had officially notified Ukraine about its military exercises on Ukrainian territory, or whether the exercises had preceded the official notification. According to the former Foreign Affairs Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Ohryzko, in this case, Russia did



Ukraine Foreign Affairs Minister Volodymyr Ohryzko.

not provide Ukraine with sufficient warning, and its large-scale military drills served as an instrument of psychological pressure over Ukraine (Ukrainian News, 29 March, 2013). This incident was also an example of Russia demonstrating to the world its military power and its ability to exert control over smaller states in the region. These recent Russian exercises conducted in the Black Sea area serve as an example of the powerful role that Russia's military presence plays in the region that is replete with multiple interests and competing agendas. Such exercises could be used effectively to

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elevate Russia’s significance in the region, as well as to send a powerful message to other political actors located outside of the immediate Black Sea area.

The subject of this paper is Sea Breeze - the largest naval, air, and land multinational military exercise, which has been hosted by Ukraine since 1997 and held in the Black

Sea region in collaboration with the U.S. Navy. The purpose of Sea Breeze is to address a number of maritime security issues, including counter-piracy, humanitarian relief operations, search and rescue, live fire, etc. Although the Sea Breeze exercise is a vital element of Ukraine’s navy modernization, it has not been analyzed in detail in previous scholarship with the exception of a few case-studies (D. Sanders, 2012b; D. D. Sanders, 2007). At the same time, the Sea Breeze exercise warrants a more detailed exploration, due to its large-scale impact and strategic importance for Ukraine.

In this paper I use the theory and body of research on maritime power (Dutton, Ross, & Tunsjø, 2013; D. Sanders, 2012a, 2012b; Stubbs & Truver, 2010; Tan, 2010; G. Till, 2013) to argue that Ukraine’s participation in the Sea Breeze exercises is crucial for the country’s own maritime power, as well as for achieving its long-term strategic Euro-Atlantic interests. The paper focuses on the public perceptions of Sea Breeze – an important factor that impacts



the viability of the exercise, as well as its immediate and long-term effects for Ukraine. The results of the media analysis of popular perceptions of the Sea Breeze exercises, based on a sample of six Ukrainian regional and national newspapers from 2001 until 2013, uncover several underlying themes that explain varying public support and resistance to these exercises. This study affirms that public opinion in Ukraine is not uniform, and any kind of successful public information campaign regarding the Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine would have to address multiple security and non-security issues.

II. The Regional Security Environment and Local Context

After the September 11 events the world faced important global challenges requiring serious modifications in approaches to national, regional and global security. One response to the changing security environment in the Post-Cold War period was the increasing regionalization of global security (Nazemroaya & Halliday, 2012; Pavliuk & Klympush-Tsintsadze, 2004; Weihe, 2007). According to Pavliuk, global security in the twenty-first century acquired a regional dimension, which “for decades had been suppressed and subordinated to the bipolar conflict” (Pavliuk, 2004). The period after the Cold War has also been characterized by the proliferation of many new security issues, including illegal migration, human trafficking, organized crime, and illegal trade of drugs and weapons, among others. These changes led to the development of horizontal interstate relationships and numerous regional and sub-regional cooperative initiatives that involve national governments, local authorities, civil society, and private actors (Pavliuk, 2004). The once very important East-West divide in Eurasia broke down into a number of diverse geographic entities with overlapping borders and memberships, and this divide is very much evident in the Black Sea region (Ivan, 2012).

The regionalization of global security and the diversity of security environments in the Black Sea region increased in significance the value of cooperative security initiatives and elevated the importance of interstate collaboration, including collaborations with state actors located outside of the Black Sea area. This explains a relatively large number of collaborative projects and organizations that build working relationships and cooperation among countries in the Black Sea region. These groups tackle numerous issues ranging from economy and energy to security. The most prominent of these groups is the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

“The purpose of Sea Breeze is to address a number of maritime security issues, including counter-piracy, humanitarian relief operations, search and rescue, live fire...”

(Pavliuk, 2004). Such organizations as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development are also very active in the region, although both of these organizations include countries located outside of the immediate Black Sea zone. There are also numerous multinational and bilateral naval peacekeeping exercises, such as the Black Sea Forces, Cooperative Partner, Sea Breeze, and Peace Farwater, which provide a valuable but less formalized framework for establishing collective security standards in the region.



Sea Breeze logo. Source: <http://www.nrcu.gov.ua/en/148/530274/>

“Sea Breeze is the largest annual training program that is aimed at reinforcing military transparency in the Black Sea area.”

The U.S. interests in the Black Sea region are many, including the use of the area as a platform for the stabilization of Afghanistan, Iraq, and possibly Iran; protection of energy transfers between the Caspian region and the West; and security, counterterrorism, and control over the proliferation of weapons and trafficking (Cohen & Irwin, 2006; Rumer & Simon, 2006; Stephen J. Blank, 2010). At the same time, U.S. and NATO involvement in the region is mostly targeted at individual countries rather than at the region as a whole, and there is a general understanding that NATO is not ready to be directly involved in the resolution of conflicts between countries in the Black Sea region (Klympush-Tsintsadze, 2004). The most systematic involvement of NATO is realized through the Partnership for Peace Program (PFP), aimed at deepening relations between NATO and partner states, as well as other programs in the areas of military cooperation and peacekeeping (Perepelytsya, 2004). The largest multinational peacekeeping exercise under PFP is Cooperative Partner; it takes place annually in the summer and involves about twenty states. These cooperative security initiatives and training programs are a reflection of new approaches to the regional security based on the broadening of the idea of national defense to more general considerations of regional and global security (Geoffrey Till, 2013).

Sea Breeze is the largest annual training program that is aimed at reinforcing military transparency in the Black Sea area. Sea Breeze started as a bilateral training program between Ukraine and the United States in 1997, and over time it became internationalized to include such states as Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Turkey, France, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Romania, and Georgia. In 1998 Russia joined the list of Sea Breeze countries, although it continues to treat the exercise with suspicion, seeing it as too great a U.S. presence in the region and a threat to its national interests (Perepelytsya, 2004). The purpose of Sea Breeze is to improve maritime safety, security and stability in the Black Sea region. Hence, the exercise specifically addresses such issues as counter-piracy, humanitarian relief operations, search and rescue, and live fire. Sea Breeze is an effective, large-scale exercise involving about 1000 Ukrainian and 300-500 foreign servicemen. Ukraine tends to rely heavily on foreign assistance for its military training, and, according to some data, about 25 per cent of country's military training comes from international military exercises (Perepelytsya, 2004). Therefore, the very costly and elaborate training objectives involved with Sea Breeze would not be achievable for Ukraine unless sponsored by a foreign government.

Although Sea Breeze exercises are very important for the Black Sea regional security and for Ukraine itself, public perception of these exercises in Ukraine is generally very negative and quite polarized. In fact, several times since 1997 massive public protests against Sea Breeze led to the disruption of several exercises and created a generally unfavorable environment for multilateral collaboration (Sanders, 2007). The major reason is that the public tends to view Ukraine's participation in Sea Breeze as part of a larger pro-NATO agenda, and Ukraine's stronger affiliation with NATO is perceived very negatively by the majority of the Ukrainian population, as well as by the current parliamentary majority (Dmitriy Tabachnik, Petr Simonenko, Sergey Grinevetskiy, & Kryuchkov, 2009; Molchanov, 2000; Simon, 2009). For example, a public opinion poll conducted by the Ukrainian national think tank "Democratic Initiatives" in 2012 indicated that 74.3 per cent of people from the East, 73.9 percent from the South, 52.3 percent from the Center and 39.2 percent from the West answered negatively to the question of whether Ukraine should join NATO (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, December 2012). These data also show evidence of the East-West divide in the public perceptions regarding NATO. At the same time, a significant proportion of the Ukrainian

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population across all regions is undecided in their views regarding NATO (see Table 1). Hence, changing the opinion of these people would help to mitigate the general hostility

of the Ukrainian population towards NATO and its security initiatives.

Public perceptions of Sea Breeze and NATO are intertwined, and studying public opinion about Sea Breeze would be helpful for understanding the Ukrainian people's perceptions regarding NATO and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations more generally. Moreover, improving people's perceptions of Sea Breeze is important for improving the overall effectiveness of this multilateral exercise, as well as improving Ukraine's international image as a predictable and

reliable partner in the Black Sea collaborative security environment. At the same time, most studies of public perception of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine provide only a vague awareness of people's opinion, without analyzing in greater depth both the regional differences and specific arguments that both sides use to support their points of view. Hence, existing public information campaigns based on too general assumptions about public opinion appear to be ineffective, as evidenced by negative public opinion over time (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, December 2012; Razumkov Center, 2008). This study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of public perceptions of the Sea Breeze exercises in Ukraine, as a prerequisite of Ukraine's prospects in the Black Sea region.

III. Theory and Research Questions

This paper uses the concept of maritime power to explain how Ukraine's participation in the Sea Breeze exercises contributes to its own military capacity and improves Ukraine's significance in the Black Sea region. Maritime power also explains why public approval of Sea Breeze serves as a crucial element of Ukraine's successful participation in the collaborative security environment. The contemporary interpretation of the idea of maritime power emerged in the post-Cold War era, when the process of globalization led to the increasing importance of the seas not only in terms of military defense, but also for growing international trade and energy transfer, as well as a growing number of economic and environmental issues (Stubbs & Truver, 2010; G. Till, 2013).

Maritime power is generally defined as varied military and non-military means required

Table 1. Should Ukraine join NATO?

**Democratic Initiatives Foundation
December 2012**

	West	Center	South	East
Yes	35.1	16	5.9	5.8
No	39.2	52.3	73.9	74.3
Undecided	25.7	31.6	20.3	19.9

for advancing political objectives in the maritime domain (Dutton, et al., 2013; D. Sanders, 2012b; Stubbs & Truver, 2010; Tan, 2010; G. Till, 2013). Maritime power manifests itself in the ability of particular states and the international community to maintain peace, good order, and security in the maritime domain (Stubbs & Truver, 2010). Maritime power is grounded in four specific attributes of the sea: the sea as a resource, the sea as a medium of transportation and exchange, the sea as a medium of information, and the sea as a medium for dominion (G. Till, 2013). All these aspects of maritime power are very important in the Black Sea region - an area of diverse and often conflicting interests.

The main advantages of maritime power, as compared to land and air power, include its greater flexibility, mobility, reach, visibility, and ability to deploy a range of capabilities and fulfill multiple purposes, such as deterrence, diplomacy, humanitarian intervention and war fighting, without the need of facilities stationed in a particular territory (Tan, 2010). Aside from these benefits, maritime power is strategically important as a political instrument of the state and as a visible manifestation of its power (Tan, 2010). According to Grygiel, ideological, cultural, and historical factors all shape the maritime power of a particular state actor, and such power is greatly dependent on a strategic mindset of political elites (Grygiel, 2013). All these factors are important in Ukraine - a country that is divided along geographical and political lines and is often torn between the spheres of Eastern and Western influence. Moreover, Ukraine is a country where political and public views regarding international security preferences diverge, and there is no unified strategy of achieving such security. These internal conflicts significantly reduce Ukraine's ability to exercise its maritime power.

Maritime power includes both quantitative elements (naval assets and capabilities) and qualitative elements (access to infrastructure, security environment and relations with other countries in the region; personnel training and morale, and internal state dynamics). The strength of both quantitative and qualitative elements of maritime power is vital for a state's overall maritime capacity and its ability to influence the regional security environment. In this regard, for a country like Ukraine, international military exercises such as Sea Breeze present a valuable opportunity to improve both types of elements of its maritime power, thus expanding its strategic positioning in the Black Sea region.

The concept of maritime power, unlike an older concept of navy power, recognizes the value of smaller states along with navy super powers (Haydon, 2010). These states serve as coast guards that ensure maritime security and safety close to their shores, counter illegal migration and sea-borne contraband, protect maritime environments and resources, and



safeguard lives and property on the seas (Stubbs & Truver, 2010). The growing international role of countries possessing insignificant military potential that stems from the new security paradigm developed after the Cold War (Perepelytsya, 2004) renders a significant role to countries such as Ukraine in ensuring the overall security in the Black Sea region. Hence, the maritime power of smaller states like Ukraine becomes an important asset for overall regional security. Such maritime power ensures the military and naval balance in the region, and, along with coping with day-to-day security issues, it helps to mitigate disputes among larger states.

The new maritime security regime based on the idea of maritime power signifies a shift towards cooperative approaches to security, where different countries realize benefits of coordinated actions for preventing and mitigating common and global security threats (G. Till, 2013). The presence of many international organizations in the Black Sea region and the involvement of both NATO and the United States in these regional affairs are examples of the new maritime security regime. This is important because economically and politically weak states like Ukraine are often unprepared to cope efficiently with multiple security threats on their own (Pavliuk, 2004).

Maritime power in an increasingly globalizing world presupposes that inclusive good order at sea and cooperative naval diplomacy are contingent upon the collective action of both major and minor naval-states. There is an understanding that weak coastal states are not only vulnerable themselves, but they also “can threaten the security of maritime commons and even the continuity of global commerce” (G. Till, 2013, p. 38). Hence, Ukraine’s own maritime power (efficient and defensive in nature) is important for the power balance and collective security in the Black Sea region. At the same time, due to its continuing economic struggle and political instability, Ukraine has been unable to consolidate solid maritime power on its own, and therefore its contribution to the collective maritime security regime in the Black Sea region is in question (D. Sanders, 2012b; D. D. Sanders, 2007).

“...due to its continuing economic struggle and political instability, Ukraine has been unable to consolidate solid maritime power on its own, and therefore its contribution to the collective maritime security regime in the Black Sea region is in question...”

This paper argues that participation in international collaborative navy exercises, such as Sea Breeze, is vital for Ukraine’s own maritime power, and the success of these exercises and the very fact of their existence are contingent upon the internal state dynamics and public approval of Sea Breeze in Ukraine. At the same time, there have been no analyses of the changes in public perception since the start of Sea Breeze exercises in 1997, and there have been no studies of the more specific reasons of public disapproval of these exercises. This paper approaches these questions by exploring the evolution in public perception of the Sea Breeze exercises over time, and by looking at the regional variations of public perception.

IV. Methodology

This study uses media analysis in order to assess changes in Ukrainian public perception regarding the Sea Breeze exercises over time and also considers regional variations in public perception. Media analysis is generally used to examine the media portrayal of politically salient issues, and while it mostly reflects the views of political elites (Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Robinson, 2001), it is also possible to use media analysis as a methodological tool for analyzing public opinion. In the case of the Sea Breeze exercises, media analysis reported in this paper appears to be consistent with the results of Ukrainian public opinion polls regarding NATO. Moreover, newspapers included in the sample frequently cite public views and local opinion polls about Sea Breeze that are consistent with the paper’s findings. This both validates the findings and justifies using media analysis for examining popular opinion about Sea Breeze.

This study used the East View UDB-URK electronic database of Ukrainian newspapers to create a sample of publications about Sea Breeze. The database contains electronic versions of major regional and national Ukrainian- and Russian-language newspapers since 2000 (the year when most newspapers were digitized in Ukraine). For the purposes of this study, four regional and two national newspapers were selected to draw a sample of publications about the Sea Breeze exercises: Lvivska Hazeta (Lviv), Krymskaya Pravda (Crimea), Vecherniy Kharkov (Kharkiv), Donbass (Donetsk), *Golos Ukrayiny* (Kyiv), and *Zerkalo Nedeli*(Kyiv).

Hence, the sample reflects public views regarding Sea Breeze in the Eastern (Kharkiv and Donetsk), Southern (Crimea), Western (Lviv) and Central (Kyiv) regions of Ukraine.

The newspapers selected for the study are different in scope and have slightly different purposes and audiences, which is one of the study's limitations. However, all of these papers are representative of the general popular views regarding Sea Breeze in different parts of Ukraine. The newspapers were selected based on their availability and the duration of coverage. Thus, the study chose to look at one major newspaper per region for all the regions that had newspapers available in the East View database (provided that a newspaper was still in print at the time of sampling.)¹ Such an approach introduces certain selection bias by discriminating against newspapers that might have contained valuable information about Sea Breeze but were not included into the sample because of their peripheral regional importance or the lack of the subscription time. At the same time, selecting papers that are currently in print was important for analyzing the change over time, and selecting only one paper per region allowed including more regions into the study. Hence, these sampling choices were justified, considering the research questions.

The unit of analysis in this study was a publication, and the initial sampling of articles occurred naturally, by selecting the entire set of articles about Sea Breeze available in the selected papers during the time frame covered by the East View database (2000-until now). In total, 207 articles were used for pre-coding Sea-Breeze-related content and identifying main themes and coding categories (18 articles in *Lvivska Hazeta*, 90 articles in *Krymskaya Pravda*, 8 articles in *Vecherniy Kharkov*, 16 articles in *Donbass*, 60 articles in *Golos Ukrayiny*, and 15 articles in *Zerkalo Nedeli*). The final sample of 100 articles was chosen for more in-depth coding. This sample included every article available in papers with fewer than twenty relevant articles per paper. For papers with a larger number of relevant articles, only the twenty most relevant articles were chosen for coding.

In order to examine changes in public perceptions of the Sea Breeze exercises over time, the sample of newspaper publications was broken down into three time periods: 2001-2004 (Kuchma's Ukraine), 2005-2009 (Orange Revolution Ukraine), and 2010-2013 (Post-Orange Revolution Ukraine). Due to the limitations of data availability, newspapers in the final sample (100 articles) were distributed unevenly between these three time periods with only 4

¹ Several other regions had newspapers archived in the East View database; however, some of these newspapers either ceased to exist or were brand new. Such papers were excluded from the sample because they did not provide information regarding the change of public perception over time.

articles falling into 2001-2004, 21 into 2010-2013 and 75 into 2005-2009. Therefore, it was only possible to make meaningful comparisons of articles between the latter two time periods.

While analysis in this paper was based on both looking at the frequencies of specific terms and examining the content and relationships between different terms, the findings are based mostly on qualitative analysis of the articles' contents. Selected newspaper articles were coded by region, and the same set of codes was used across the entire sample. For each of the regional set of articles, as part of the data processing relevant codes were combined into factors. Each of these factors emerged by creating the hierarchy of the article-based codes on the basis of their semantic and substantive co-occurrence. Articles were coded using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software.

V. Research Findings

5.1. Changes in Public Perceptions of Sea Breeze Over Time

This study attempted to analyze the dynamics of public perceptions regarding the Sea Breeze exercises and how these perceptions evolved since the start of Sea Breeze in 1997. However, due to data limitations it was impossible to do a comprehensive longitudinal analysis of the change in public perceptions. Electronic versions of newspapers in the East View database were available only starting in 2001, and there was an uneven distribution of articles



Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko.

during the time periods 2001-2004 (Kuchma's Ukraine), 2005-2009 (Orange Revolution Ukraine), and 2010-2013 (post-Orange Revolution Ukraine). Most articles fell in the time range 2005-2009, which is understandable considering the salience of the cancellation of Sea Breeze in 2006 that provoked substantial media response (Sanders, 2007). This period was also characterized by the higher salience of the Euro-Atlantic issues in Ukraine due to the presidency of Victor Yushchenko, who actively pursued a Euro-Atlantic agenda. However, the comparison of articles between Orange Revo-



lution Ukraine and post-Orange Revolution Ukraine revealed some important findings. It turns out that although the generally negative public perception of foreign military presence on Ukrainian territory did not change significantly, the reporting of the issue in the Southern and Eastern regional newspapers became more moderate after the change of the post-Orange Revolution government.

A more in-depth content analysis of particular newspaper articles offers some insights regarding the changes in public perception. Thus, President Victor Yushenko made foreign policy one of his top priorities in office, attempting to bring Ukraine closer to the Euro-Atlantic community, foster the process of Ukraine's accession to NATO, and pursue a larger pro-European Union agenda. At the level of public perceptions, however, such an assertive pro-Western foreign policy agenda was not well received by the public, especially in relation to NATO. As the example of the Sea Breeze exercises demonstrates, since the Ukrainian public was not adequately prepared for the presence of foreign military forces on its territory, the Sea Breeze exercises caused massive protests in Crimea and other regions of Ukraine. In fact, during the post-Orange Revolution period most of the critique in local papers was directed against the president himself and his policies, rather than against Sea Breeze itself. Hence, the perceived assertive pro-Western objectives of the Sea Breeze exercise resulted in the greater public resistance against this training, particularly in the Southern and Eastern regions of Ukraine.

Yushenko's successor, Victor Yanukovich, employed a more moderate position that included reframing Ukraine's military doctrine and adopting a non-alignment policy towards

NATO. He has attempted to redevelop and improve relations with Russia, and to establish Ukraine as a neutral country with many friends rather than one main strategic ally. Consequently, although this more moderate governmental policy slowed Ukraine several steps back on its Euro-Atlantic path, it also reduced many of the common public fears associated with NATO and, in some ways, created a more conducive environment for the Sea Breeze exercises. Although anti-Sea Breeze protests did not stop completely and the public did not change their overall views, people became more accepting of this training, and media reporting became more constructive and more factual, as illustrated by the following quotes:



Current Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich..

Only the toughest optimists believed that the end of the 'orange' period in the new Ukrainian history will immediately make things better. In reality, not everything changed for better, and not everything changed immediately. We already learned that... The Parliament Deputies all together supported conducting in Crimea those sadly remembered drills "Sea Breeze". As if there was no large-scale Crimean public protests against the presence of the American military in the Peninsular, and there was no appeal of the Crimean Parliament to their national colleagues and the President asking, to cancel the drills right in the middle of a tourism season. Now, the new government, similar to Yushenko and Tymoschenko, is in a hurry to make an agreement with Crimean Tatar radicals... trying to gain their loyalty in the land issues... Krymskaia pravda, No. 89, May 22, 2010

As part of the preparation for the international educational exercises 'Sea Breeze,' the navy forces of the border patrol unit of the Military-Naval Complex of Ukraine have completed their training in the Western Crimea and are heading to the main area to continue the drills... The military equipment and personnel are stationed on the ships "Konstantin Olshanskyy" and "Kirovohrad". The series of civil tactical exercises preceded the main training program. Today the ships with the soldiers will arrive to the final training destination. Krymskaia pravda, No. 121, July 09, 2010

One lesson that could be drawn from this is that pursuing a one-sided foreign policy agenda in a geopolitically divided country like Ukraine might not be the right path. The lessons of Sea Breeze are applicable to other important foreign policy issues, including Ukraine's relations with NATO. The example of Sea Breeze demonstrates that before the question of NATO membership reaches the point of a national referendum, a much more serious and long-term public information campaign needs to be conducted in Ukraine to raise the level of public awareness regarding NATO and collaborative international security in general. Perhaps such a campaign could also address the issues of military and institutional reform, and popularize the idea of transparent and effective public institutions and the value of international collaboration more generally, thus informing the Ukrainian public about the broader implications of the Euro-Atlantic path.

5.2. Public Perceptions of Sea Breeze: General Findings

The media analysis conducted for this study resulted in four groups of factors that describe variations of public perceptions regarding Sea Breeze: internal factors, external factors, arguments in support of Sea Breeze, and arguments against Sea Breeze. Perhaps the most interesting observation is that in some cases the same issue is used either in support of or against Sea Breeze, depending on the newspaper's region. For example, different papers saw Sea Breeze as both an obstacle against the development of tourism - because military drills in Crimea may discourage foreign tourists from spending their vacation in Crimea, and as a factor that is beneficial for the local economy and tourism - because Sea Breeze results in greater international publicity and attracts foreign tourists to Crimea and foreign investments into the Crimean economy. This finding is important because it shows that universal public information campaigns about Sea Breeze may not be as successful as information campaigns that accommodate regional differences and address various popular sentiments.

Important internal factors for public disapproval of Sea Breeze include the lack of the local government's support of the joint military exercises in the Black Sea region; the lack of political consensus among different levels of the national government, as well as among different institutions (the President, the Parliament, the Ministry of Defense); the issue of Ukrainian territorial integrity (the presence of foreign military in Crimea); the autonomous

“This lack of objective information about the Sea Breeze exercises, their true purpose, scope and strategic goals is an alarming finding, considering that Ukraine has been participating in Sea Breeze since 1997.”

status of Crimea and the authority of the Crimean government to make decisions regarding a foreign presence on the peninsula; the role of national and local political parties and grassroots organizations in Crimea; and the relationship between Sea Breeze and Ukraine's foreign policy objectives (the non-alignment doctrine).

The major theme that runs across all regional newspapers is the general sense of the lack of information regarding the Sea Breeze exercises, and, in some cases, even the sense of deliberate misinformation of the public regarding the true purposes and scope of Sea Breeze. The lack of information is explained differently in different papers. While the Crimean newspaper blames the situation on the central government, the newspaper from Lviv talks about the role of pro-Russian and other grassroots organizations in Crimea in spreading misleading information:

However, by its own actions, official Kyiv substantially undermined the prestige of the central government, first and foremost in the eyes of its own people. Everything started from the conspiring secrecy that surrounded the visit of an American military ship to Crimea. That ship delivered not humanitarian assistance but firearms and construction equipment for conducting American-Ukrainian exercises in July-August of this year. This resulted in massive protests of city residents at the entrance of the seaport. Krymskaia Pravda, No. 101, June 6, 2006

The leader of Russian community of Feodosia, Nelli Protasova, said that by some means and through their military connections they found out that there will be unloading of some secret weapons in the port...At the same time, the director of the Feodosia Sea Port, Oleksandr Chumachenko said that the ship has no weapons on it...and that these protests are nothing but an ordered political provocation. L'vivs'ka hazeta, No. 095, March 31, 2006

This lack of objective information about the Sea Breeze exercises, their true purpose, scope and strategic goals is an alarming finding, considering that Ukraine has been participating in Sea Breeze since 1997. The lack of information about Sea Breeze explains why so many stereotypes about Ukraine's participation in international collaborative security initiatives continue to persist over time, and it also explains why the overall public opinion about Ukraine's involvement in NATO and other security structures has remained practically unchanged since the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, even objective evidence of successful outcomes of Sea Breeze for the Ukrainian Navy does not mitigate negative public perceptions and various stereotypes about the exercises. It is clear that a better public information campaign is needed in order to address this issue, and the future success of Ukraine's participation in joint exercises in the Black Sea region is contingent on the proper level of public awareness.

The framing of the critique of the government in relation to Sea Breeze depends on the region. In some papers there is a strong sense of regionalism, and the failings of Sea Breeze are blamed exclusively on the national government, especially the president, the minister of defense, and the Parliamentary majority. These state actors are blamed for their inability to reach consensus regarding Sea Breeze and to establish a broader strategic interest for Ukraine that includes the country's participation in Sea Breeze.

There is also a theme of "people versus government," where the national government is accused of not being able to stand for its own people and protect Ukraine from foreign invaders (U.S. and NATO). The national government is accused of not caring enough about the opinion of people in Crimea and Odessa (regions where Sea Breeze is conducted) and of neglecting the voice of local governments. In these articles the national government's disregard of public opinion is viewed as a non-democratic practice that should be seriously condemned. For example, the cancellation of the Sea Breeze exercises in 2006 was portrayed as a victory of people over government:

"Lessons of Respect. We also have reasons for pride. Ukrainian people firmly and clearly showed to Ukrainian politicians who is the true leader/ruler in the country... The people won. And it is not about NATO. It is about us showing the government how to respect our opinion" (Donbass, No. 239, 29 December 2006).



Ukrainian Minister of Defense, Anatoliy Grytsenko.

On the contrary, other papers display a strong sense of nationalism and a sense that conducting Sea Breeze on a regular basis is vitally important for the capacity of the Ukrainian Armed Forces as well as for the long-term strategic interests of Ukraine and its image abroad. In these articles, the topics of international military training, the capacity of Ukraine's Army, and the strategic interest of Ukraine are intertwined:

"Without military training the army is lost," - said the Minister of Defense of Ukraine Anatoliy Grytsenko. "Political forces that advocate against international

military training, are advocating against their own army” (L’vivs’ka hazeta No. 114 6 July 2007).

Newspapers that discuss the relationship between the Sea Breeze exercises and long-term strategic interests of Ukraine generally attribute the failings of Sea Breeze to local government administrations and anti-NATO and pro-Russian grassroots organizations:

Pro-Russian forces in Crimea blocked the unloading of American ship... Everything started from Sunday events when the activists of pro-Russian organizations and Vitrenko’s Block blocked all exits from the Feodosia port terminals. As a result, the American military transport ship ‘Adventure’ failed to unload the necessary equipment. L’vivs’ka hazeta No. 095, March 31, 2006

And now the events in Feodosia are openly called an element of the ideological war that Russia conducts against Ukraine, to prevent its membership in NATO... Ukraine’s membership in NATO is a very important question, either Ukraine will defend itself as a democratic state, or it will be subordinated to Russia, or even will become part of the Federation. L’vivs’ka hazeta, No. 099, June 6, 2006

One of the most common public stereotypes regarding Sea Breeze is the perception of Ukraine’s involvement in these exercises as evidence of betrayal of Ukrainian territorial integrity. Governmental authorization of Sea Breeze in Ukraine is perceived as an authorization of foreign military presence on Ukrainian territory, and Sea Breeze itself is perceived as a military operation with hidden intelligence purposes rather than as an educational initiative. The other common misconceptions include associating Sea Breeze with NATO and its military interest in Ukraine, as opposed to looking at it as a multilateral partnership; viewing Sea Breeze as an anti-Russian provocation and something that is aimed at spoiling friendly relations between Ukraine and Russia; and looking at Sea Breeze as something that costs Ukraine a lot of money and trouble rather than bringing numerous opportunities.

There is also a strong sense of fear of the Sea Breeze exercises and evident paranoia about the ‘true’ goals of the drills. In a number of articles, anti- Sea Breeze sentiment is grounded in the anti-war slogans developed by Communist and Progressive Socialist parties in Ukraine. These slogans essentially appeal to the deeply rooted feelings of many Ukrainian citizens and their personal memory about the tragic events of the WWII that affected many Ukrainian families. Ukrainian Communists and Socialists effectively use these sentiments to position the Sea Breeze exercises as a foreign military invasion that needs to be stopped no matter what:

Despite the ban of the Prymorsky District Court of Odessa... the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party Natalia Vitrenko and two hundreds party loyalists continue the protests. Vitrenko is confident that the court's decision does not affect her... The protesters hold such slogans: 'Ukraine needs peace and not a NATO jacket.' 'Orange pigs go away! Give us the Slavic Unity,' etc... L'vivs'ka hazeta No. 117 July 11, 2007

'We want the ground under NATO soldier's feet to burn,' - said N. Vitrenko. She also adds that they [her supporters] will use other methods of conducting the war [against Sea Breeze], if someone prohibits the protests. L'vivs'ka hazeta No. 117 July 11, 2007

Finally, the theme of irony and skepticism is also very prominent in articles supporting Sea Breeze and in publications disapproving the exercises. In the first case, the Sea Breeze's supporters portray the Sea Breeze's protestors and the local government in Crimea with great irony. For instance, Lvivska Hazeta uses an ironic title such as "Give us our Slavic Unity" for one of its articles dedicated to describing protesters' motivation. *Zerkalo Nedeli* also uses irony and sarcasm in describing anti- Sea Breeze protesters:

Feodosians show, well performed by local statists and well staged by foreign directors, once again showed the wholehearted unprofessionalism and disregard of Ukraine's national interest... All branches of government today demonstrated one particular skill – to fail anything that they are responsible for. Zerkalo nedeli, No. 021, June 3, 2006

At the same time, anti-Sea Breeze articles use irony in relation to the national government. Journalists employ numerous metaphors to describe the national government's deficiencies, as well as the inability of Ukrainian politicians to uphold the "true" national interest:

Kyiv likes to complain about the 'older brother' complex that Russians possess but it prefers to remain silent about its own complexes. After such evident failure in Crimea, it talks about high levels of technical and military collaboration between Russia and NATO. If Russians can, why can't we? Here is where the complex of the 'younger brother' comes in play! Krymskaia Pravda, No. 101, June 6, 2006

This all [the lack of consensus among the President and the Parliament] reminds us of a good tsar and clumsy boyars, who all the time trick the tsar. Krymskaia Pravda, No. 101, June 6, 2006

As one famous joke says, 'Where is the logic?' The position of Ukrainian politicians regarding Sea Breeze 2009 only confirmed the tendency of the last years. Army, defense, security – these are not the questions of interest to our wonderful statesmen. These notions long ago fell off the hook of the Ukrainian values of our government. *Zerkalo nedeli*, No. 25, July 04, 2009

Along with the numerous criticisms, there are also a number of arguments that are used in support of Sea Breeze, including the emphasis on the international character of the exercises; a positive image abroad gained by Ukraine through its participation in Sea Breeze; the educational value of Sea Breeze; the emphasis on collaboration and training; and the acknowledgement of the financial benefits of Sea Breeze. Newspapers that support Sea Breeze tend to engage in a more factual reporting of information about the exercises, by highlighting facts rather than emotions, even in cases when Sea Breeze was cancelled due to the public protests. For example, when Sea Breeze was cancelled in 2006, Lviv newspaper reported: “American technical personnel left the territory of Ukraine because the term of their trip has ended. They are returning to their permanent places of employment – to their factories, hospitals and educational institutions in the U.S. Because of the situation in Feodosia, they did not manage to perform their task to improve the infrastructure of the Starokrymsyy field.”² Additionally, the supporters of Sea Breeze explain its benefits for Ukraine by using pragmatic arguments (specific instrumental benefits of the exercises).

Major external factors associated with the Sea Breeze’s approval or disapproval reflect the views of outside political actors who influence Ukrainian public opinion about Sea Breeze: the Russian Federation, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, the European Union. Externally generated themes related to Sea Breeze include the manifestation of Russian security interests in the region; the discourse about the Russian Black Sea Fleet’s stationing on Ukrainian territory; the role of the Russian media and the issue of Russian language in Ukraine; U.S. interests in the Black Sea region and the role of NATO; and the European Union’s neighborhood policy. The Sea Breeze question is also discussed in the context of the Eurasian energy transit and energy security. Finally, some papers also discuss the fact that while the Russian Federation does not support Sea Breeze, Russia itself regularly engages in joint military exercises in the Black Sea area.

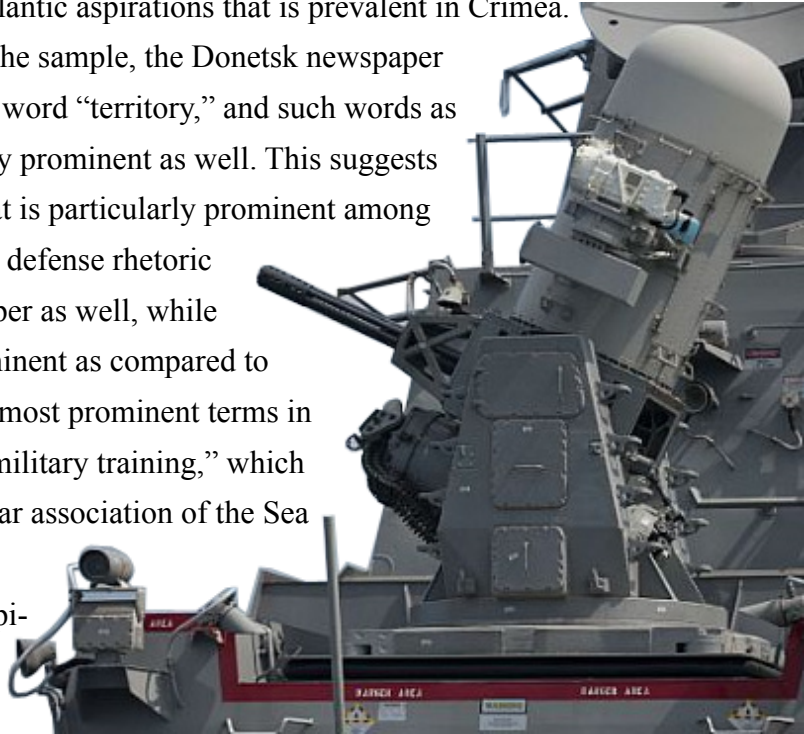
5.3. Public Perceptions of Sea Breeze: Regional Variations

This study demonstrated that regional differences in public perceptions of the Sea Breeze exercises in Ukraine are rather qualitative than quantitative in nature. However, a brief look at the relative word frequencies - performed by using the word clouds analysis through Wordle - reveals that, along with the common themes apparent in all of the regional and national newspapers, there is also some variation in the prominence of certain aspects of the Sea

2 The field that was supposed to be prepared for Sea Breeze 2006

Breeze's portrayal. For example, there is a clear presence of words of disapproval and a generally very negative portrayal of Sea Breeze in all Crimean articles. Such words as "protest," "against," and "military"³ appear to be the second on the list of prominence, following such common themes as "Crimea," "NATO," and "Sea Breeze." This could be explained by the immediate salience of Sea Breeze for the Crimean population, and a generally negative attitude toward Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations that is prevalent in Crimea.

As compared to other papers in the sample, the Donetsk newspaper has a very high frequency of the word "territory," and such words as "military" and "defense" are very prominent as well. This suggests a strong sense of regionalism that is particularly prominent among the Donetsk public. Military and defense rhetoric is salient in the Kharkiv newspaper as well, while territorial concerns are less prominent as compared to Donetsk. On the other hand, the most prominent terms in Lviv articles are "NATO" and "military training," which is the evidence of a strong popular association of the Sea Breeze exercises with the NATO agenda and the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine.



“The Donetsk public is fearful not only that the national government is deciding everything despite local opposition but also that a powerful foreign actor (the U.S.) might subvert the national government in Ukraine by controlling its decisions.”

The national newspaper *Golos Ukrayiny*, which provides generally neutral reporting of Sea Breeze, emphasizes such terms as "education and training." This paper also frequently mentions the United States, Turkey, Greece, Georgia, and Azerbaijan to emphasize the international character of Sea Breeze. Finally, an independent national newspaper, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, has a relatively high frequency of such words as "training," "government/power," "President," "Ukraine," "Black Sea Fleet," "Russia," "ships," "navy," "European Union," and "time." Hence, the themes highlighted in this newspaper are broader, and the reporting

3 While the word 'military' is not a disapproval term on its own, any mentioning of a military character of the Sea Breeze exercises is being portrayed as a negative thing in these papers

about Sea Breeze is more holistic as compared to other newspapers from the sample. Finally, the prominence of the word “time” in articles from *Zerkalo Nedeli* is an indicator of the Sea Breeze’s urgency.

The major qualitative finding of this study is that the East and West divide in Ukraine is an oversimplified explanation of Ukrainian public opinion regarding Sea Breeze. An in-depth content analysis of newspaper articles reveals some interesting observations regarding regional variations of public opinion that go beyond East-West divide. Consistent with the public opinion polls, people in the Western part of Ukraine are generally more supportive of Ukraine’s participation in Sea Breeze. However, different regions use different arguments in supporting or disapproving Sea Breeze.

The coverage of Sea Breeze in the Lviv newspaper is rather balanced, pragmatic and factual. It is based on reporting hard facts as opposed to emotions more so than in any other regional paper, and it highlights specific instrumental as well as longer-term strategic benefits of Ukraine’s participation in the Sea Breeze exercises:

...[o]ur country first and foremost will benefit from these international military training. Firstly, we are renting out our own training fields and are receiving rental payments. Secondly, our Ministry of Defense is improving because of the new projects, skills and knowledge. All training is financed by foreign governments, so we are killing two rabbits at once. Firstly, we are getting closer to our integration with NATO, and secondly, we are filling up the state budget. L'vivs'ka hazeta, No. 033, February 22, 2006

Journalists from this paper are also attempting to report both positive outcomes of Sea Breeze and some reservations about it. In discussing these pros and cons, the paper emphasizes the idea of the national interest as the guiding principle for Ukraine’s foreign policy goals. Therefore, concerns of local governments and grassroots organizations should matter less in making decisions about Ukraine’s participation in Sea Breeze than considerations of the long-term strategic benefits for Ukraine as a country. The idea of national interest also manifests itself in the evident desire for Ukraine not to be left behind, and to be included in all Euro-Atlantic initiatives. In fact, this fear of being left behind is one of the most prominent arguments in support of Ukraine’s participation in Sea Breeze shared by the people in Lviv. In several articles this argument has an emotional connotation, where the “war” for Sea Breeze is called the “war” for Ukraine.

Other arguments in support of Sea Breeze in Lviv include: the positive impact of Sea Breeze on Ukraine’s military capacity; educational and training value of the exercises;

benefits for the tourism infrastructure; improved local economy; financial gains due to the mostly foreign-based funding of the exercises; and better European integration prospects for Ukraine. The Lviv newspaper also talks about the Sea Breeze's protesters with notable irony, blaming the organization of protests mainly on the Communists and old-school Ukrainian politicians. In fact, Lviv journalists associate public protests against Sea Breeze in Crimea with the sentiment from the Soviet past rather than something that should continue to impact the future of Ukraine. Occasionally the protesters are spoken of as local criminal elements in Crimea who object to any kind of foreign involvement due to their personal corrupt interests. Finally, the paper strongly condemns the involvement of Russian media and Russian politicians in supporting the anti-Sea Breeze demonstrations in Ukraine.

Articles about Sea Breeze in the Donetsk newspaper are generally less critical of Ukraine's participation in these exercises than in Crimean or Kharkiv newspapers. The major objection against Sea Breeze in the Donetsk paper is less about the fear of foreign military presence on the Ukrainian territory and more about how the decision about Sea Breeze was made. Particularly, there is a strong objection regarding the national government making decisions that are not supported by local governments and people in the regions. There is also a strong sense of regionalism in Donetsk and the desire for granting greater authority to local governments, as opposed to the national interest concerns that are voiced in Lviv. Thus, Donetsk articles defend the authority and power of Crimean people to be the ultimate deciders of whether Sea Breeze should be held in Crimea. At the same time, the Ukrainian national government that is making decisions despite local concerns is portrayed as a non-democratic government and as a violator of the basic democratic freedoms of Ukrainian people. This theme of people versus government appears to be very prominent in the anti-Sea Breeze rhetoric. Donetsk articles also recognize the important role of local media and civil society groups that serve as a powerful force against Sea Breeze and ensure that democratic freedoms of Ukrainian people are not violated. The role of religious organizations in Ukraine, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, is acknowledged as well. Metaphorically speaking, public resistance to Sea Breeze is called "a walk of the Cross" against evil.⁴

The Donetsk newspaper makes a clear association between Sea Breeze and NATO, and since the anti-NATO sentiment is very prevalent in the region, negative public opinion about Sea Breeze feeds itself. In several articles there is a call to proclaim Donetsk a NATO-free

4 A reference to the walk with the Cross in an Orthodox Christian church, as a powerful force against the evil power

territory. Following this logic, Sea Breeze is called a foreign invasion of the Ukrainian land, immediate harm to Ukraine's territorial integrity and a factor that is detrimental to Ukraine's sovereignty. The Donetsk public is fearful not only that the national government is deciding everything despite local opposition but also that a powerful foreign actor (the U.S.) might subvert the national government in Ukraine by controlling its decisions. To a lesser extent, the paper also discusses the geopolitical alignment of Ukraine and the idea that being closer with Russia is more beneficial than building partnerships with NATO. Aside from NATO-related objections against Sea Breeze, the Donetsk paper talks about the harms of Sea Breeze for local tourism in Crimea. On the other hand, Sea Breeze cancellations are viewed as lost opportunities for Ukraine and its military capacity. Hence, the Donetsk public is not against the Sea Breeze exercises per se, but rather against too much foreign influence in Ukraine, and against the intentions of the Ukrainian government to make unilateral decisions regardless of people's preferences at the local level.

Articles in the Kharkiv newspaper are openly negative about Sea Breeze. There is a strong war rhetoric and fear that Sea Breeze is a form of direct military invasion of Ukraine (not the invasion of Ukraine's sovereignty like in the Donetsk paper). There is also a suspicion that Sea Breeze is just another form of foreign military intelligence in Ukraine and a program with some hidden motives:

The large-scale military and technical assistance is provided bilaterally. Despite significant expenses, joint exercises allow the Alliance's military and its member-states, particularly the U.S., to conduct 'legal' intelligence and learn about the territory of a potential war theater, in case if they have to fight here with the 'potential enemy.' Vechernii Khar'kov, No. 059, June 03, 2006

On May 29 public representatives blocked the unloading of the American cargo ship in the port of Feodosia. In their opinion, the unloading of cargo was in fact a cover up for a possible landing of American military brigades on a missile field located 25 kilometers away from Feodosia for their further participation in the NATO drills. Vechernii Khar'kov, No. 78, July 22, 2006

Evidence of war-related rhetoric is found in statements of the leader of the Communist Party of Crimea, widely cited in the Kharkiv newspaper. For example, he assures the Ukrainian government that protesters will meet American and NATO officers "lying on the ground, under the cars and tanks of the foreign invaders." The sense of paranoia and fear in relation to Sea Breeze is caused by the assumption that these exercises are the first step towards establishing a foreign military presence in Ukraine. The Kharkiv paper also calls the cancellation of Sea Breeze in 2006 a victory against foreign invaders. Thus, the lack of information about

Sea Breeze and its true goals is the major factor producing public suspicion and paranoia.

Other arguments used to criticize Sea Breeze in Kharkiv include negative consequences of the U.S.-Ukraine joint exercises for Ukraine-Russia relations; public suspicion regarding a American military interest in Ukraine; and Ukraine's losses (financial and human) due to its participation in the Sea Breeze exercises and in NATO-related missions (Kosovo, Afghanistan, etc.) Hence, articles in the Kharkiv paper rarely talk about the benefits of Ukraine's participation in Sea Breeze. Ukraine is seen not as an independent political actor, but as a tool for foreign political actors in achieving their own goals, as illustrated by this quotation: "Foreign military will be located in Ukraine. For each fifteen hundred Americans there will be ten Russians." (Vechernii Khar'kov, No. 026, May 10, 2007)

The paper is also very critical about the Orange Revolution government and President Yuschenko. Yuschenko and his government are called passive NATO followers, handicapped, slow, inefficient, uncoordinated, and apathetic about Ukraine's national interest. It claims that the President's behavior has no moral or legal foundations. On the other hand, the current Ukrainian government is considered more pragmatic, strategic, dedicated to the Army, and more serious. Hence, there is a hope that the public in Kharkiv (and perhaps in other Eastern regions of Ukraine) would become more accepting of Sea Breeze in the longer term, especially if these exercises are portrayed as an educational program.

The Crimean newspaper portrays Sea Breeze in a very negative light. It views these exercises as a foreign invasion and an attack against Ukraine that violates the Ukrainian Constitution and the principle of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Similar to the Donetsk paper, there is a strong sense of regionalism in Crimea and a harsh critique of the national government's unwillingness to consider the preferences of the Crimean people. Crimean articles condemn the national government's disrespect towards the democratic freedoms of speech and free expression that are exercised by the anti-Sea Breeze protesters. The national government is described as uncivilized, ignorant, and stubborn. In some of these articles the Ukrainian national government is portrayed as hostile towards the Russian population of Crimea:

But having nothing else available to threaten the Russian population and Crimean Tatars, Kyiv used Sea Breeze as the only rescue option. Along with this, these exercises under a Nazi romantic name 'Sea Breeze' are aimed at developing strategic and tactical military actions against a very precise state – judging by the schemes and maps – that is neighboring with an island 'Green Republic.' Krymskaia Pravda, No. 106, June 14, 2006

As a Sea Breeze critique, the Crimean paper points out that anti-Sea Breeze protests have

consolidated the entire spectrum of local political parties against Sea Breeze. Hence, these protests are a true expression of the public interest. Additionally, in its attempt to prove the non-democratic character of conducting Sea Breeze in Crimea, the paper cites the results of a sociological survey conducted in Crimea among the student population. The vast majority of respondents in this survey disapproved of Sea Breeze, and the paper cites the following statements by respondents as illustrations: “Yankee go home,” “Crimea is a resort not a training base,” and “Never again,” as well as more neutral statements such as: “It is not happening in my back yard, so I do not care.”

Other arguments against Sea Breeze voiced in the Crimean paper include the fear of a hidden military purpose of Sea Breeze; the fear that Sea Breeze will exacerbate regional divisions in Ukraine and lead to a civil war; the fear of potential environmental hazards from the Sea Breeze exercises; negative outcomes for the tourism industry in Crimea; and the fear of using Sea Breeze as a step towards joining NATO. Similar to other publications, the Crimean paper emphasizes the lack of information about Sea Breeze. The paper also heavily uses irony to portray its disapproval of Sea Breeze. For instance, the American ship “Adventure,” which was supposed to participate in the Sea Breeze drills in 2006, was called a “Titanic for Ukraine” (*Krymskaia Pravda*, No. 101, June 6, 2006). Another example is the ironic portrayal of the Ukrainian Army, which is so poor and deficient that the United States has to cover 90 per cent of Sea Breeze costs.⁵

The war rhetoric is another prominent theme in Crimean articles. Thus, Sea Breeze is often compared to the Nazi invasion of Soviet Union during WWII. The paper cites such political slogans as, “We will die under foreign cars and tanks but will not let Sea Breeze happen.” Due to the presence of strong pro-Russian interest in Crimea, the paper has the strongest emphasis on Ukraine’s affiliation with Russia and advocacy of stronger Russia-Ukraine ties, as compared to any other papers in the sample. In fact, the issue of ties with Russia appears to be the strongest argument against Sea Breeze. While Crimean journalists deny Russia’s involvement in organizing the anti-Sea Breeze protests, they emphasize the friendly and supportive character of Russia’s involvement in the overall destiny of Crimea and Ukraine. As an example, the paper sends such messages as “Russian brothers are always with us,” and “Together we beat Napoleon and Hitler, and so we will cope with NATO.” Overall, there is a sense that people in Crimea would be more accepting of Sea Breeze if the exercises were not linked with NATO, and if Sea Breeze would not damage Ukraine-Russia relations.

5 This is different from the Kharkiv paper, where the Ukrainian Army is treated in a high regard.

The reporting of Sea Breeze in the national newspaper *Golos Ukrayiny*⁶ is much less emotional than in any of the regional newspapers. The coverage is largely factual (what is happening and when), and there is generally not much interpretation or judgment either of the protesters' actions or national government's actions. Public protests against Sea Breeze are reported in the context of a political struggle among different political parties in Ukraine rather than something that reflects a true people's will. Several times, Crimean protests are contrasted against successful Sea Breeze exercises in Odessa, and people in Odessa are called "Russian speaking nationalists." Similar to other papers, *Golos Ukrayiny* acknowledges the lack of information about Sea Breeze and NATO in general. According to this paper, the anti-NATO propaganda in Ukraine is way ahead of pro-NATO educational campaigns, due to the lack of public funds allocated for such campaigns.

The tone of publications in *Golos Ukrayiny* is generally very pragmatic. The paper emphasizes humanitarian, educational, and technical missions of Sea Breeze, and acknowledges that Ukraine would not be able to afford such valuable training on its own. The paper also highlights the particular tangible benefits of Sea Breeze – valuable training for the Ukrainian Navy, numerous benefits for the local economy and tourism, benefits for the image of Ukraine abroad, and financial benefits for the Ukrainian budget. Journalists give examples of particular projects where American military forces assisted the local population (fixed something, cleaned the territory, taught skills, etc) as additional evidence of Sea Breeze's usefulness. Finally, the newspaper also carries the message that NATO is not an enemy anymore, but rather a potential strategic partner for Ukraine.

An independent national newspaper, *Zerkalo Nedeli* presents more emotional reporting about Sea Breeze as compared to *Golos Ukrayiny*. However, the reporting is also much more balanced, as compared to the regional papers. *Zerkalo Nedeli* contains the largest number of educational publications about Sea Breeze as a collaborative project between Ukraine and the U.S., rather than as collaboration with NATO, as peacekeeping training rather than a military program, etc. The reporting is also more analytical and less focused on the short-term outcomes of Sea Breeze. Overall, the paper condemns the idea of regionalism and advocates a broader notion of the national interest (similar to the Lviv newspaper). It condemns the actions of Crimean protesters, calls public protests a "staged action," and calls Crimean protesters "dilatants," "fakes," "betrayers of the national interest," and "organizers of a shameful show."

6 This is the newspaper of the Ukrainian Parliament, so it is considered pro-government.

The paper criticizes anti-Ukrainian organizations in Crimea as the betrayers of the national interest (by contrast, in Donetsk these organizations are called active civil society). It also criticizes Ukrainian politicians, especially the Parliament, for their indecisiveness and inefficiency in approving the Sea Breeze exercises in 2006. Finally, it critiques the involvement of Russia and the Russian media in supporting and popularizing anti-Sea Breeze protests, and condemns the inability of Ukrainian political parties to recognize the true national interest for Ukraine:

Ukrainian reaction regarding the cancellation of Sea Breeze was very calm. Famous marginals, who agonize nervously about the notion of a Ukrainian navy, happily reported about the victory against 'NATO's aggression.' We can understand them. We can envy them because they live in the country, where anyone can openly say and do anything to destroy the state, while the state is just closing its eyes. One memorable saying by Natalia Vitrenko⁷ - 'And why does Ukraine need its own navy?' - speaks more of the situation than the full book of V.I. Lenin's works... Singular voices from Parliament... that predicted vast damage of the Sea Breeze's cancellation for the international image of Ukraine... could not change the situation. And the public too did not display much worry about it. Zerkalo nedeli, No. 25, July 04, 2009

The idea of the national interest is taken even further by explaining that each lost Sea Breeze is a lost opportunity for Ukraine. *Zerkalo Nedel* calls each lost Sea Breeze exercise a most definite step towards diminishing Ukraine's foreign relations capacity and establishing Russia's unchecked supremacy in the Black Sea Region. Hence, Russia always ends up being ahead of Ukraine; it uses Ukraine to demonstrate its dominance in the region and serves as the mediator of Ukraine's relations with other states. Consequently, Ukraine loses its capacity to act independently and to represent itself in the region and internationally. In the long run, each lost Sea Breeze exercise contributes to a poor international image of Ukraine as an unreliable and unre-



Leader of the Progressive Socialist Party
Natalia Vitrenko

⁷ A member of the Progressive Socialist Party

“All newspapers selected for this analysis reveal alarming levels of public distrust towards Sea Breeze that is caused by the lack of objective information about these exercises and a general sense of misinformation and secrecy about sea Breeze.”

dictable political actor. Finally, the paper sends a message that the long-term goal of Sea Breeze is strengthening Black Sea naval security. Therefore, Ukraine’s participation in these exercises is important for Ukraine’s successful integration in the Black Sea security environment.

VI. The Discussion of Research Implications and Future Directions

Due to its strategic positioning in the Black Sea area, Ukraine plays an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of the collective security environment in the region. At the same time, Ukraine’s own maritime power requires substantial improvements, and without direct foreign assistance and Ukraine’s participation in multinational collaborative security projects, the country will not be able to achieve adequate levels of its maritime capacity. Several factors limit Ukraine’s ability to take full advantage of the outside technical assistance available through international security organizations and collaborative security projects. First, the current Ukrainian government is firm about its decision to pursue a nonalignment policy with regard to NATO⁸, which leaves Ukraine with the Partnership for Peace but limits its more



direct participation in one of the most powerful global security organizations. Second, the Ukrainian public holds an unwaveringly negative opinion regarding Ukraine's direct involvement in NATO's operations, as well as Ukraine's involvement in other Euro-Atlantic security initiatives. Many years of public information campaigns on this subject have not produced a perceptible change in public opinion.

This study looked at Sea Breeze - the largest international navy exercises conducted in the Black Sea region since 1996 with the United States and several other countries. Despite the international and educational character of Sea Breeze, these exercises still cause massive public protests in Ukraine. This study analyzed the dynamics and regional variations of Ukrainian public perceptions regarding Sea Breeze and identified the main reasons of public approval and disapproval of these exercises. The findings have several important implications for understanding the public view regarding Ukraine's participation in these exercises, as well as Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic prospects more generally.

The most evident finding from this study is that Ukraine has a long way to go on its road toward greater integration into a global collective security framework. All newspapers selected for this analysis reveal alarming levels of public distrust towards Sea Breeze that is caused by the lack of objective information about these exercises and a general sense of misinformation and secrecy about sea Breeze. These findings are disappointing, considering the long-term history of Sea Breeze and the large amounts of foreign money and efforts spent on public information campaigns in Ukraine. These findings call for the reevaluation of the existing informational campaigns about Sea Breeze and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration more generally.

The other major finding is that the idea of the East-West divide in Ukraine is oversimplified when we are talking about Euro-Atlantic integration. Common culture, history and geography are powerful predictors of public perceptions; however, each region in Ukraine has its own internal dynamics that influence public views regarding important foreign policy issues. As this study demonstrated, consistent with NATO-related public opinion polls, the Sea Breeze exercises find much greater support in the West and in the Center rather than in the East or South of Ukraine. However, the study also finds that the East and West orientations in Ukraine are more complex than they are often portrayed. Thus, the reasons for approval and disapproval of the Sea Breeze exercises are both similar and dissimilar in different regions of

8 As evidenced by the new Military Doctrine adopted in 2010

the country. For instance, people in some regions are fearful of Sea Breeze because they see it as a foreign government's invasion of their territory; people from other parts of the country, while not denying the value of Sea Breeze, disapprove of how the Ukrainian national government unilaterally approves Sea Breeze without first consulting with local governments. The findings of this study call for a more targeted approach to public information campaigns, capable of addressing existing public stereotypes and recognizing regional differences.

Finally, the examination of the change in public perceptions regarding Sea Breeze over time demonstrates that pursuing a one-sided assertive foreign policy agenda in a geopolitically divided country like Ukraine might not be the right or the shortest path to achieving the desired long-term outcome. As this study shows, a more moderate and a more pragmatic governmental policy towards Ukraine's participation in foreign security frameworks is more likely to generate better public perception than assertive and emotional appeals to the Euro-Atlantic future. There seems to be a need for a greater investment of time and resources into the more comprehensive educational campaigns regarding the role of Ukraine in the Black Sea region and in the Euro-Atlantic space.

Although findings of this study are not immune from the research design and data availability limitations, they are an important first step towards a deeper exploration of Ukrainian public sentiments regarding Sea Breeze, NATO and collective security frameworks in the Black Sea region. These preliminary findings could serve as guiding ideas for more detailed research to be performed involving greater diversity of data sources.

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